

Turner defends CIA foreign influence activity

BY NED MACKAY

The CIA, which has been criticized for its efforts to influence political events in foreign countries, must retain the potential to do so, CIA Director Stansfield Turner told a Stanford University audience Monday night.

But such actions should be taken "more judiciously" and "with greater control," Turner said.

"I'm not in the business of pushing covert action," Turner told one questioner from the audience. He said he wants to retain the potential for covert action, however, as one alternative action.

As an example, he said that if a terrorist group were to obtain a nuclear weapon, he would feel it necessary to have available a plan of covert action in case the United States needed to use it.

Turner addressed a packed audience of about 800 people at Kresge Auditorium in the Stanford School of Law. His speech was sponsored by the student government, the Hoover Institution and the law society.

There were some anti-CIA demonstrators who staged a brief "guerrilla theatre" skit during the question and answer period. The skit was booed. In general, Turner's appearance was without major incident.

Turner told the audience that the CIA's responsibilities are greater than ever before, in these times of military parity with the Soviet Union, worldwide economic interdependence, and political independence of many nations which follow neither the American nor the Soviet lead.

Despite criticism in recent years of the CIA's role, Turner said the country is now "turning the corner" and "taking a constructive attitude toward intelligence." He believed the CIA will be able to conduct its activities "within the confines of our democratic standards."

Turner criticized Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked to the media the Pentagon Papers on the Vietnam War. He said that by extension, if every citizen felt he could make an individual judgment on what should be classified and what should not, the result would be "chaos."

However many of Turner's listeners applauded at the mention of Ellsberg's name.

"It is time for this country to return to where the public places a modicum of confidence in its public and elected officials," Turner commented.

In answer to questions from the audience, Turner said he has approved some CIA covert activities, with the permission of the president and the oversight committees. The covert actions, he said, were "not that exciting."

He declined to say whether he believed past CIA actions in Chile against the Allende government were justified. Turner said it is clear the CIA has done things in the past which have met with public approval, and some which have not. He said he would neither "whitewash" the CIA nor "wear a hair shirt" about previous CIA mistakes, but would try to make the agency more effective in the future.